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Wins local award for the third year in a row
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RETAIL

ANDY'S MUSIC | BY ALEX HARRELL

LEADING BY DESIGN

Jim Andrews opened Andy's Music in April of 1977 in Mobile, Alabama. That's just under 40 years of business — which, for Andrews, translates into about 200 different holiday decorations, 70 remerchandised displays, and around two dozen major design renovations. Andrews believes a smart design decision can make or break sales; his store *is* the product display.

"Some people say that a nice store will turn away the rockers, but it hasn't," he laughed. "They like to shop in nice places, too."

Andy's Music has been named a NAMM's Top 100 Dealer five times in the past six years. The *Mobile Register's Readers Choice Digest* named Andy's Music the town's favorite music store for 14 consecutive years; up until they ceased publication. Granted, it's the only full-line music retail store that offers lessons, rentals and instrument repairs in Mobile. But that doesn't stop Andrews from putting on a show.

"It's funny, people will come in after we re-arrange and think we got new gear, [but] we just moved it around," he said. Andrews regularly gets comments from customers regarding how they "love to come" in because it's "one of the nicest stores around" and "everything is easy to find."



Andy's Music's showroom
Inset: Jim Andrews

Andy's Music uses smart design decisions to boost its sales

Andy's Music began in 1977 as a one-man shop. The store was about 800 square feet, Andrews recalled. Nine months later, they relocated to a 4,000-square-foot space — nearly five times the size of the original shop.

After several years of leasing at the new location, Andrews made the decision to buy the building. He wanted the shop to be the music retail equivalent to what Nordstrom is to department stores. The building was designed

and renovated as a music retail store; the interior designer was a female clarinetist who worked closely with the architect to construct the store exactly as envisioned by Andrews and his team.

"If a building's exterior is attractive, it will be inviting to customers," he said. "I don't know anyone who is drawn to an unattractive, disordered shop."

For fellow retailers relying on displays to rack in revenue,

Andrews offers the following tips:

DO YOUR HOMEWORK. "Our thorough planning and preparation enabled us to include almost everything we wanted," Andrews admitted. This included five soundproof lesson studios, customized showcase counters, a second floor balcony for choir performances — even corrugated, steel shutter window protectors.

KEEP IT CLEAN. "The building was completed in 1995, and we still get customer comments about the attractiveness," said Andrews. To maintain appearances, a local company comes by twice a month for heavy-duty cleaning.

MAINTAIN STRATEGIC PLACEMENT. When you go to a grocery store, the milk is in the back. "They make you go to the back for the everyday items, so we do that kind of thing [here]," he explained. By keeping accessories along the walk to the shop's studios, students pass products every day.

"A well designed store sends a positive message, creates expectations, and motivates [customers] to make unplanned purchases," Andrews said. "A business can have the most unique product displays, but if the retail space is uninviting, who wants to visit?" **MI**